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Account of How K.G.B. 'Disinforms'

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 10 — When a Western correspondent arrives in Moscow, he is told, as sometimes happens, that, regrettably, no apartment is available; he must live in a hotel.

A few months later, a friendly Soviet reporter, shocked at this deplorable bureaucratic inefficiency, intercedes. Suddenly a spacious apartment is made available for the grateful Westerner.

Such supposed coincidences were concocted as a part of a broad effort by Soviet intelligence agencies to subvert, deceive and recruit members of the Western press, says Ilya Dzhirkvelov, a former official in the K.G.B. who defected in 1980.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov said in an interview today that he personally had not "co-opted" any American journalists, although he said he knew indirectly of such cases in his career of more than four decades with Soviet intelligence and as a journalist. He did not provide any names.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov is in Washington to present the latest issue of Disinformation, a monthly newsletter that seeks to predict what themes the Soviet authorities will play up in their press campaigns and elsewhere. He serves on the advisory board of the newsletter.

Discrediting a Rising Leader

In the two-hour interview, Mr. Dzhirkvelov described how the K.G.B. carried out similar schemes in Africa, Moscow and elsewhere. He said he was present in 1960 when senior Soviet officials asked for suggestions on how the press could be used to discredit West Germany's Franz Joseph Strauss, now the premier of Bavaria and then a ris-

ing political star in West Germany who was seen as a contender to replace Chancellor Konrad Adenauer.

As Mr. Dzhirkvelov recounted, "They said, 'We have a very big problem in West Germany. It's very possible that after Adenauer, the Chancellor of Germany would be Strauss. We have to do everything necessary to compromise him. Who can compromise Strauss? Of course: journalists.'"

The result, he said, was an article planted with the help of intermediaries in the German magazine Der Spiegel, which had been a bitter opponent of Mr. Strauss.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov, who now lives in England, has not previously given interviews. He did, however, give a prepared statement in a libel case that arose after the British magazine Now printed a speech in which Sir James Goldsmith contended that Der Spiegel's coverage of Mr. Strauss had been stage-managed by the Soviet authorities. That suit was settled before trial in 1984 when the magazine agreed to drop the case and Mr. Goldsmith agreed to state publicly that Der Spiegel was not "conscious" of any manipulation.

Activities in Africa

Mr. Dzhirkvelov worked directly for the K.G.B. in the 1940's and 1950's in directorates that deal with both espionage abroad and operations involving foreigners in the Moscow region. Later, he joined Tass and became deputy general secretary of the Soviet Journalists Union.

In the interview, he described his career as a Tass correspondent in Africa, when he wrote dispatches for the Soviet news agency by day and then, secretly, worked to bribe African journalists

who plant items written by Moscow.

Mr. Dzhirkvelov asserted that Moscow has made elaborate efforts to plant "disinformation," newspaper articles, broadcasts or rumors that have a kernel of truth but are false in their main thrust.

He said that these appear in the press with both the unwitting and witting assistance of journalists.

In Africa, for instance, he said the Russians had decided in the 1960's that the Peace Corps was improving America's image in the region. To counter this, Mr. Dzhirkvelov decided to plant an item in an African newspaper.

He was stationed at the time in Tanzania, but he said he drove to Uganda where he knew a reporter whom he could bribe. The journalist, he said, agreed to put his name on a dispatch written by Moscow alleging that the Peace Corps in East Africa was the tool of the C.I.A.

He said this report gained some credence, in part because the Russians had discovered that one of the Peace Corps volunteers was a retired intelligence officer.

Difficulty of Misinformatting

Mr. Dzhirkvelov said that disinformation sufficiently convincing to fool Western journalists and readers was not easy to formulate. He noted that it must always contain elements that can be verified. In the case of Mr. Strauss, for instance, he said one of the articles planted in the press involved his possible purchase of a villa.

The Soviet authorities had learned that Mr. Strauss had hired a real estate agent to look for a modest villa. But he said that the version that later appeared in print had Mr. Strauss using millions from secret bank accounts to finance the purchase of a palatial mansion.

The former K.G.B. officials said items that he believed were "disinformation" have continued to appear in the Western press, and more often in the third world. But he said this was not an everyday occurrence.

"It is not so easy to prepare disinformation," he said. "If you want to be primitive and crude, sure. I heard someone say it is possible to find in American or English newspapers Soviet disinformation all the time. This is a big exaggeration. It is not true."

He said even though his time as a foreign correspondent involved intelligence duties, he was also expected to work as a journalist. Some employees of Tass, he said, are "clean" and have no espionage duties. Others, like himself, also worked for Soviet intelligence. To blur the distinction, he said, Tass insists that all of its writers file articles.

"It's like, the old Reuters saying," he said, referring to the British owned news agency. "No stories — No job."